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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000516

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NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR J. FRAZER
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY
PARIS FOR C. NEARY
NAIROBI FOR T. PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/01/2013

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ASEC](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: BOMB ATTACKS PLANNED: LOW-LEVEL MDC INTELLIGENCE
OFFICIAL

Classified By: Political Officer Audu Besmer for reasons 1.5 b/d

Summary:

1. (S) Charles Mutama, Harare regional coordinator for intelligence for the MDC, reported to Poloff that the Security, Intelligence, and Youth branches of the MDC are planning bomb attacks on police stations, militia bases, and ZANU-PF-owned shops and gas stations in five cities around the country in the coming weeks. While Mutama has in the past been a reliable source, we have no independent confirmation that the MDC leadership authorizes the plan, and no information on the capability of anyone in the MDC to execute such attacks. End Summary.

2. (S) Charles Mutama, who identifies himself as Harare regional coordinator for intelligence for the MDC, reported to Poloff today that the Security, Intelligence, and Youth branches of the MDC are planning dynamite and petrol bomb attacks on police stations, militia bases, and ZANU-PF-owned shops and gas stations in five cities around the country in the coming weeks.

Long-time Contact

3. (S) Mutama, who has been known to the Political Section for some time, was recruited into the MDC from the student movement in 2000, along with MP Job Sikhala. He said he received training in Uganda around that time, but did not describe the training. He was tortured along with Job Sikhala on January 14--the resulting burns and scars are still visible. Mutama said he reports to the number two in MDC Intelligence, who in turn reports to MDC Intelligence Head Solomon Chikowero. He said Chikowero was briefing MDC Deputy Secretary General Gift Chimankire on the planned attacks.

Call to Action Misinterpreted as Call to Attack ?

4. (S) We have heard from a variety of MDC sources that there are plans to organize mass action for as early as March 13, but more likely about two weeks later due to incomplete planning. Mutama said that the Intelligence, Security, and Youth branches are interpreting the call to mass action as a call for confrontational activities such as attacking the types of targets listed above. His particular role was to identify targets in Harare. He said that plans for the Harare activities were incomplete, but in good shape, however he was not sure of the status of plans for attacks in Bulawayo, Mutare, Gweru and Masvingo.

Targets Identified but Plans Incomplete

5. (S) He said he had identified 41 police stations, several businesses from a list of ZANU-PF-owned businesses supplied by the MDC Information Department, including several gas stations in Harare owned by ZANU-PF officials. He mentioned that the planning for attacks on most police stations in the Harare area were in good shape except for several police stations in the low-density suburbs, as MDC youths were not well represented in those areas. He mentioned specifically that a gas station in Harare suburb of Highfield owned by ZANU-PF former Harare mayor Solomon Tawengwa, and a slew of Exor gas stations in the Harare area owned by ZANU-PF MP Savior Kasukuwere, were on the list, as well as other ZANU-PF owned shops. He also mentioned that employees of the Tel-One central telephone switch house on Samora Machel Ave. and 2nd Street in downtown Harare had identified phone circuits associated with police stations and senior ZANU-PF officials, and would disable those circuits at a critical moment. He said that most of the more senior people involved in the planning had police or military backgrounds, but that the actual attacks would be carried out by MDC youths.

6. (S) He commented that while plans were well underway, preparations were nevertheless incomplete, or at least he was unaware of all the details. He said he thought the MDC leadership planning the attacks had not thought through the whole scenario very well; for example, he anticipated there

would be reprisals by GOZ authorities, but no one had suggested a plan for dealing with those. He said the goal of the activities was to pressure the GOZ to hold fresh elections, to re-open negotiations with the MDC leadership, and to galvanize the public behind the MDC. He said he thought the MDC leadership was motivated to plan such activities by recent press reports criticizing Morgan Tsvangirai for taking an ineffective armchair approach in

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comparison to the more confrontational approach of National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) Director Lovemore Madhuku, Harare MDC Mayor Elias Mudzuri, and maverick MDC MP Job Sikhala.

USG Would Not Condone Violence

17. (S) Poloff responded that the Embassy and USG would not support any violent activities, that such activities would not motivate the GOZ to re-open negotiations with the MDC and instead would most likely justify a violent crackdown against the party. Poloff said the Embassy would support peaceful mass action involving as many Zimbabweans as possible, and that this represents the democratic process. Violent actions by a few individuals does not represent democracy, would jeopardize all that the MDC stood for, and was a bad idea. Mutama responded that while he was involved in the planning, he didn't think he could head off the initiative, which he suggested had wide appeal.

18. (S) Mutama is a longtime Embassy contact who called on Poloff to ask his advice on whether he should accept an invitation to go to South Africa for torture counseling at this critical moment. Poloff's questions about why the moment was critical lead to Mutama revealing the above.

Comment:

19. (S) Mutama is a fairly low-level MDC official, but nevertheless levelheaded and soft-spoken, almost bookish. He is not one of the ones who would actually carry out the attacks, but his sincerity suggests he is describing a planning process that is actually under discussion. We are aware that he may be testing the waters for this plan on behalf of either the CIO (in the wake of his torture) or the MDC, and will make discreet inquiries as to his legitimacy. It is very likely that some members of the MDC are frustrated and angry and would like to bomb ZANU-PF facilities, but we have no independent confirmation that the MDC leadership authorizes the plan. We also doubt that the MDC is actually capable of executing such attacks, especially on the scale that Mutama described. Similar past warnings by anti-Mugabe individuals that violent anti-government actions were imminent have not panned out. We are dubious that this one will either, but will continue to follow this threat as closely as discretion permits and will urge the MDC at multiple levels not to engage in violent acts. End Comment.
SULLIVAN